

# In the Name of Self-Representation: A Case Study on Narrative Construction and Ethnic Identity of Yi's Autobiographical Ethnography

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper attempts to reveal how Liu Yaohan, the first native Yi (yizu 彝族)<sup>1</sup> ethnologist of People's Republic of China adjusted the narrative strategy and textual construction of a Bimo (畢摩)<sup>2</sup> named Jike-Zeho's autobiography, and therefore put it into a special type of experimental ethnographic writing. In doing so, Liu reaffirmed the national consciousness expressed repeatedly by Yi intellectuals since Modern times, and demonstrated how the intellectuals of the ethnic minority group devoted to the academic reconstruction in the new age and context, as well as the academic consciousness of perusing academic discourse.

**KEY WORDS:** Ethnography, Narration, Ethnic Identity, Liu Yaohan, Yi Study

In the reflecting context of modern anthropology after the publishing of the path breaking book *Writing Culture*,<sup>3</sup> it is certain to involve the relationship of culture and power while writing ethnography. As two kinds of narrative modes, differences between "Self-representation" and "imposed representation" are not merely the narrative diversities between emic and etic. As Cheung Siu-woo put it, "self-representation" often means the aroused national and cultural consciousness of some group, and also is regarded as a discourse tool to contend with "other-representation" done by other groups.<sup>4</sup> Indigenous Anthropology always emphasizes that

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<sup>1</sup> Yi, an old nationality with great culture and tradition, dwells in the Big and Small Liangshan(大小凉山) in southwest of China. Yi people call themselves Nuosu (諾蘇) (lolo 倮倮, etc) in their own language.

<sup>2</sup> Bimo, the professional who are in charge of Yi's religion practice and ritual, help Yi people keep in couch with God, Ghost and Ancestral Soul. Bimo hold high social status In Yi tradition, and most of them are from hereditary Bimo clan.

<sup>3</sup> James. Clifford and George. E. Marcus, ed, *Writing Culture—the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Beijing: Commercial Press, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Cheung Siu-woo focuses on the ethnographical writing exploration and practice of Shi Qigui, a native Miao Scholar. It gives a detailed analysis of the conflict and contradiction of the ethnographical writing between "Self-representation" of native

native researchers have some methodology advantages at the “self-representation” of their own culture. Then, can extreme mode of “self-representation”—the narrative of the life of single individual studied by an ethnologist, continue and even strengthen the advantage of this methodology?

Here presents is a special case of ethnography writing. From Sep. 1986 to Jun. 1988, invited by Liu Yaohan(劉堯漢), a Yi ethnologist, a famous Yi Bimo named Jake-Zeho (吉克則夥) in Liangshang State(涼山州) finished his *Between Gods and Ghosts—the Self-representation of A Yi Flamen* (《我在神鬼之間——一個彝族祭司的“自述”》),<sup>5</sup> by nuncupation. In the case of Jake-Zeho, “self-representation” is a Yi elder tells his own story naturally in his old age. While in the name of “self-representation”, ethnologist Liu Yaohan took a special crack at the overall participation from the preparation phase to interview, from writing guidance to later edit.

## 1. Narrative Operation and “Ethnographical Process” of Self-representation Text

**Jike-Erda-Zeho** (吉克·爾達·則夥): *A member of Jike-Clan, which is an old and eminent Bimo hereditary clan of Sichuan and Yunnan, and a branch of Liangshan Yi nationality. He is a famous Bimo in the Patrilineal and Slavery Clanship society of Liangshan Yi nationality.*

**Liu Yaohan**: *the first native Yi ethnologist of New China, who is also a researcher of National Institute of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the director of Institute of Yi Culture Studeis in Chuxiong of Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences and a well-known ethnologist and historian at home and abroad.*

In mid-1980s, the ethnologist Liu Yaohan edited a *Yi Cultural Study Series* all written by native Yi writers, which is planed to write about 30 books to give an overall introduction of Yi culture.<sup>6</sup> As one of this series, *Between Gods and Ghosts—the Self-representation of a Yi Flamen*, which is dictated by Jike-Erda-Zeho (Yi), noted by Jike-Zeho-Shiho (吉克·則夥·史夥) (Yi) and edited by Liu Yaohan (Yi), is one of outstanding “Yi People writing Yi people (彝族寫彝族)” study model and writing advocated by Liu Yaohan. From the beginning, Jike-Zeho’s Self-representation Text is destined not to be a story full of personal sentiment and legend to present separately. Liu Yaohan puts himself into the producing process of text and constructs its ethnographical characteristics with the strong discipline consciousness. In other words, he turned Jike-Zeho’s self-representation into ethnography. This process is fulfilled by adjusting the narrative structure and strategy of text. And Jike-Zeho’s self-representation is integrated from interior text and exterior text into a special mode of ethnography.

### 1.1 Interior narrative Structure and Narrative Transformation of Self-representation

In the book *Between Gods and Ghosts*, Jike-Zehos’s self-representation text includes

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intellectuals of ethnic groups and “Imposed-representation” of Han researchers during the Republican Period. To do so, he reveals the complicated relations among politics, culture and populations. See Cheung Siu-woo, *From “Imposed Representation” to “Self-Representation”: Shi Qigui’s Exploration and Practice of Miao Identity in Southwest Hunan during the Republican Period*. In *Journal of Guangxi University for Nationalities (Philosophy and Social Science Edition)*, 2008(5): 37-45.

<sup>5</sup> Jike. Erda. Zeho(Yi) dictated, Jike. Zeho. Shihuo(Yi) recorded, Liu Yaohan(Yi) edited, *Between Gods And Ghosts—the Self-Representation of A Yi Flamen*. Kunming: Yunnan People’s Publishing House, 1990.

<sup>6</sup> Jike 1990: (*General Preface*) 1-27.

Introduction and the main text.

### 1.1. 1 Narrative Structure and Chapter Organization

To review one's life history, the narrative structure of self-representation is often vertical according to the diachronic time axis, while Jike-Zeho's self-representation chooses to be lateral on the basis of synchronic social and cultural category. The main text includes five chapters. Besides "*Personal Experiences*", the other four are "*Family Tree and location of Jike-Clan*", "*All Existence, Ancestral Spirit (zuling 祖靈) and Augury*", "*Using Land and Employing Slaves*" and "*Farming-Grazing and Craftwork*". This differentiates Jike's self-representation from usual reminiscent autobiographical style, but made the former just to accord with the classical ethnography narrative structure of modern ethnology and anthropology doing imposed-representation on "the other". This narrative structure refers to many representative contents, such as time-space distribution, relative system, social system, economic and producing method, religious belief, traditional craftwork, etc. It covers many fields related to the living and social cultural structure of investigation objects.

The above structural characteristic can also be seen in the inter-chapters of main text. For instance, in "*Childhood Experiences*" of Chapter Two, the review of Jike-Zeho did not develop diachronically, while introduced "childhood games", "eldership education", "flamen education" and "social education" respectively.<sup>7</sup> Different education approaches are used to describe a young Yi Bimo brought into Yi society through imitation, games and cultural inheritance. And this process of socialization and professionalization is shown as the joint result of family education, vocational education and social education. These characteristics show some special characters of this Yi Bimo's self-representation, and obviously, this is closely related to the production of the text.

#### 1.1.2. Multiple Perspectives and Narrative Transformation

The main text was dictated by Jike-Zeho, who knows little Chinese, and noted by his son Jike-Shiho, who is a primary school teacher and edited by Liu Yaohan. From the perspective of the producing process, this text should be regarded as the Yi self-representation ethnography, a cooperating fruit of narrator, register and researcher. A Bimo who sticks to his own tradition, a primary school teacher who received some Han education and a native Yi ethnologist, they have different cultural consciousness, which embodied in Jike-Zeho's self-representation text as multiple perspectives and narrative transformation.

For instance, in chapter "*Personal Experiences*", it is obvious to see this narrative transformation in "(2) *Holding the Fashi* (法事 religious rituals) and *Daochang* (道場 Dao-Field)". After reviewing Jike-Zeho's Bimo career and some detailed situation of 1974's "studying class for superstitious professional (*mixin zhiyezhe* 迷信職業者)" from the prospective of the first person "me", suddenly the text turned to introduce "the category of *Fashi* and *Daochang*". In this part, the first person "me" suddenly disappeared, instead, the potential narrator explains and classifies the Yi traditional Bimo ritual—Holding "Bi"(畢), from the prospective of the third person.

*In Yi, Fashi(religious rituals) and Daochang(Dao-field) is generally named as "Bi", which*

<sup>7</sup> Jike 1990: (Main Context) 17-26.

has the similar meaning as “sacrifice” in Chinese. “Zabi (匝畢)”, which means a way of “cleaning”, is a method to pursue safety of families, thriving of domestic animals and a good harvest through offering, praying and impetrating. In Chinese we use “holding Daochang( Dao-field)”. “Ribi(日畢)”, which means “tiger”, is a method to fight against enemy and gain success, to get rid of threat and to make up for shortcomings through driving, removing devils and cursing. In Chinese we use “holding Fashi( religious rituals)”. As a matter of fact, Dao-field and religious rituals are done in rotation. The so-called differences are classified by their “subject centers”. It can mainly be divided into the following parts: (The following is a professional classification tree diagram of Yi Bimo sacrifice. Omit)<sup>8</sup>

Narrative transformation of the aforementioned words first embodies at the transformation from “me” (Bimo) to an ethnologist. At the same time, it embodies at the subjective experienced description of Bimo to the objective analysis of an ethnologist.

First and foremost, taking Han, the main nationality of China as the reference system of Yi, Bimo is under cultural explanation. “Bi”, “Zabi” and “Ribi” are respectively regarded as “sacrifice”, “doing Daochang” and “holding Fashi” in Chinese knowledge system. And in later narration, the former are replaced by the latter. Besides, many Bimo sacrificing speeches appeared in this book are basically using both Chinese with Yi language pronunciation (not Yi language) and Chinese free translation.

In the second place, holding “Bi” done by Bimo is divided into categories. The author analyses different purposes, functions and means of “Daochang” and “Fashi” and at the same time, he points out clearly that “the so-called differences of Daochang and Fashi” is only classified according to their “subject centers”. It is obvious that “subject center” is one of the classical concepts of modern human social sciences.

Thirdly, a professional classification tree diagram of Yi Bimo sacrifice is drawn. With the narration of Bimo Jike, in this book we can find several tens location sketch maps of Dao-field and religious rituals as well as the holy-branch arrangement diagrams.

Although the above quotation is part of the self-representation of 70-year-old Yi Bimo, it can well be counted as a model of ethnography writing. From the prospective of the text, it is no doubt that Jike-zeho is the narrator. However, from the prospective of the basic mode of anthropology’s traditional fieldwork, Jike-Zeho’s subject position is overthrown. Instead, he is more like the object of investigation and an information provider. His son plays the role of the translator and assistant, while ethnologist Liu Yaohan holds the subject position. Liu is the fieldworker who is objective and rational, although in most cases he may not be in the field.

## **1.2. Exterior structure Frame of Self-representation Text and Features of Ethnography**

It is the whole structure of *Between Gods and Ghosts* to put self-representation text of Jike-Zeho in this book. Nearly 70 pages, which include *General Preface*, *Book Review*, *Preface*, *Afterword* and *Appendix*, take about one quarter of the total. The above parts emphasize the ethnographical value and function of Jike-Zeho’s self-representation.

### **1.2.1. General Preface, Book Review and Preface**

<sup>8</sup> Jike 1990: (*Main Context*) 31-32.

*General Preface*, *Book Review* and *Preface* before the main context give an overall explanation of the purpose, methods and significance of this *Yi Cultural Study Series*. In the *General Preface*, Liu Yaohan briefly introduces 21 books of this series, which include –Xiangtianfen (tomb toward the heaven 向天墳), Astrology (占星術), Gourd Worship (葫蘆崇拜), Ten-month Calendar (十月曆法) and Yi ancient books etc, and highly praised them as “the countryside Yi young ladies”. Accorded with other books of this series, this book is definitely positioned as the ethnological study with Yi nationality as its object, but not the legend caused by the title *Between Gods and Ghost*.

Besides, Liu Yaohan takes Jike-Zeho’s self-representation of clan family tree and his job as a flamen as a fieldwork case to study “the original religion, philosophy and science of Liangshan Yi”. However, “to reach this requirement, it won’t be successful through several face-to-face interviews. It can only be got over a bottle of wine or after a meal, at the side of the fire pit or his side, chatting while his son Jike-Shiho noted all his words.”<sup>9</sup> Interview is one of the basic methods of fieldwork. And the process of writing this book displays its features as a case of fieldwork study.

### 1.2.2. Appendix

The *Appendix* of this book is *List of Population, Production, Daily Life and Culture of Jike Clan in Parts of Sichuan Province*,<sup>10</sup> which includes 16 survey statistics. With the Jike Clan as the object, these surveys can be classified into 3 parts. The first part is population survey (8), the second is survey on family economic status (5) and the third is survey on social culture (3), in which regional distribution, population sampling statistics, production and consuming situation and education situation are referred to. The content of this appendix is full and accurate with professional design and words. With comparison of research data in different periods, we can see the transformation of times of Jike Clan and even all Liangshan Yi society, which also reflects the ethnological study actuality and its limitation at that time from a side face. For instance, *Jike Clan Culture Development Sample List since the Founding of New Regime (education level list of junior college and above in Mabian County of Leshan City 樂山市馬邊縣)*. The statistics showed that up to Aug. 1986, there are 11 members of Jike Clan in this area who have junior college education background and above, and most of whom work for government. The “note” below this list shows that:

*there are about 1,300 Jike Clan members in this county. There is no material about those whose education background is under technical secondary school. There is few people in Jike Clan know Chinese before democratic reform and the base of formal degree is zero.*<sup>11</sup>

Since Liangshan Democratic Reform in the mid-50s, the old Liangshan Yi society steps into the express way of “modernization” within three decades. At the same time, this “modernization” process exerted Han influence upon traditional Liangshan Yi culture directly and thoroughly. When investigators put all kinds of outside index of Han’s “modernization” such as “education level”, “know Chinese characters” and “the base of formal degree” into the old Bimo Clan without thinking, under the scanning full of cultural power, there are only 11 of about 1,300 Jike

<sup>9</sup> Jike 1990: (*Preface*) 2.

<sup>10</sup> Jike 1990: (*Appendix*) 235-255.

<sup>11</sup> Jike 1990: (*Appendix*) 253.

Clan members in Mabian County were listed in this table. Thus it can be seen that strong mutual-context relation was shaped by tables through objective researching norm in the emic fieldwork and Jike-Zeho's self-representation, which further strengthen the text's overall ethnographical function. This special ethnography case leads us to wonder: what does the great transformation of the Big and Small Liangshan social culture mean to Yi Bimo's tradition? Although Jike Clan has continued to multiply, when the hereditary Bimo tradition rapidly lost its sacredness, Bimo together with its scripture and ritual compliments will also fall into endangered "cultural heritage".

In fact, the narrative frame and person shift presented within the text of *Between Gods and Ghosts*, on a broader scope, exactly reflected the core problem of ethnological study model. As Prof. Xu Xinjian pointed out in *On Southwest Study*, "the narrative tradition" of southwest study on a whole has been experiencing resistance and transformation from reference directing to self directing, calling on a brand-new "third person" study model that overtook the limit of "I" and "He" under global multiculturalism.<sup>12</sup> As an important component of southwest study, the narrative tradition of Yi study was also faced with these problems of reflecting the existing model, and has been endeavoring to explore a way to go out of the representation predicament.

## 2. Experimental Ethnography and Multi-Interpretation Space of Texts

In *On Ethnographical Authority*, Clifford indicated four classic modes of anthropological writing in light of chronological sequence approximately, including experiential, interpretive, dialogistic and polyphonic modes that are applicable to all western and non-western ethnographical text writers.<sup>13</sup> Under the context of anthropological reflection tendency in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, "turns in post-modern experimental ethnography" was being carried out blossoming, and offered plenty of choices, among which the introduction of poly-perspective and polyphonic narration could effectively stimulate the conflict and dialogue within texts, unveiled deeper cultural connotation and grammar, and therefore became the frequently used rhetoric strategy in experimental ethnographical writing.<sup>14</sup>

In this case, Bimo Jike's self-presentation carries the "experiential" color. Under the effective control of "potential narrator", it is constantly shifting with researchers' interpretive analysis, namely, mixing the font and format of non-quoted parts with those of quoted parts, trying to coordinate the two writing modes into single voice, and whether it is successful is still under further discussion. Meanwhile, the direct presence of ethnologists in introduction and appendices has broken the illusion of "one voice" and indicated the existence of many voices. Voice differences have revealed the potential dialogistic features of this special ethnographical-writing text, and made it possible to interpret deeply from multi-meaning perspective.

<sup>12</sup> Xu Xinjian, *On Southwest Study*. Kunming: Yunnan Education Press, 1992: 219-250.

<sup>13</sup> Clifford also had profound research on "Text of Dialogism" and "Text of Polyphony" of ethnography and encouraged these experimental modes. See Paul Rabinow, *Representations and Social Facts: Modernity and Post-Modernity in Anthropology*. In James, Clifford and George. E. Marcus, ed., *Writing Culture—the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Beijing: Commercial Press, 2006: 296-299.

<sup>14</sup> As Norman K. Denzin pointed out, the post-contemporary experimental ethnography should be more experienced to express the narrative facts. Facing with living experience and practice, it should be written from diverse angles. See Alan Barnard, *History and Theory of Anthropology*. Beijing: Huaxia Press, 2006:184.

Firstly, ethnologist and Yi intellectual, Liu Yaohan, has made comments on Bimo tradition with evident dualism.

On one hand, he cherished the precious value of Bimo tradition which is in danger of extinction in modern society, representing a strong national self-consciousness and the sense of pride. He spoke highly of Jike-Zeho as the “sage” of “following the natural laws (法則天地)”, and at the same time drew on the experience of comments by Marx in *Conspectus of Lewis Morgan's Ancient Society*, juxtaposing it with Morgan's *Ancient Society*, believing that “this book has recorded the entire process of flamen Jike-Zeho that is rare and valuable in today's anthropological and ethnological field”.<sup>15</sup> In addition, the heading of this book adopted “flamen” directly instead of self-directing “Bimo” to proceed the potential cross-cultural translation and comparative explanation, which emphasized the significance of existence of Bimo culture in national cultural system throughout the world.

On the other hand, by adopting the prevailing social evolution standpoint at the time, he put Yi's Bimo tradition to the bottom of the chain of social culture “evolution”, regarding it as a special cultural sight with certain primitive remaining feature which “was left behind from primitive patrilineal clan period to the 1980s”, thus completely making it to be “the past” in 20<sup>th</sup> century's realistic context. Meanwhile, starting from ethnology of Marxist historical materialism, he judged a certain value of Bimo tradition, arguing that “as we see it today, the fairy tale and religious rituals of blessings and *ghost* exorcising recorded in this book were ridiculous trickery.”<sup>16</sup>

The confusion of Jike-Zeho himself is also dualistic.

Upon the influence of Yi's traditional culture, Jike-Zeho considered the religious rituals of blessings and *ghost* exorcising as a “glorious undertaking to serve others”. He was strongly proud of his profession, and in the former part of his life, he enjoyed “supreme” dignity, that is, “it was no necessary for the Bimo to give seat even if the Zi(茲chieftain) came”(茲來畢不起), which granted by traditional Yi society.<sup>17</sup> However, as the democratic reform and modernization drive of Liangshan Yi society proceed, like other Bimoes, he was continually subject to a series of political movement, modern scientism discourse as well as “advanced” Han culture, repeatedly becoming the transforming object of political culture movement. In 1974, a studying class for superstitious professionals was held in Minsheng township of Xichang city (the capital of Lianshan Yi nationality autonomic state) (涼山州西昌市民勝鄉), in which Jike-Zeho has profoundly retrospected on his lifelong Bimo and belief, saying that “decades of years have passed since I started learning Bimo, and I did a great deal of harm to people, livestock alone were at least more than 3000 heads.” He approved of Liu Yaohan's idea to narrate his lifelong experience, because “it's Yi's old culture tradition that tells how Yi has come out from a shroud of gods and ghosts to a new society.”<sup>18</sup>

In face of the ethnic tradition, Jike-Zeho looked back on a span of life history of an individual, while Liu Yaohan bore the discipline mission of modern ethnology, endeavoring to explore “the

<sup>15</sup> Jike 1990: (*Preface*) 2-3.

<sup>16</sup> Jike 1990: (*Preface*) 2-3.

<sup>17</sup> Jike 1990: (*Main Context*) 31.

<sup>18</sup> Jike 1990: (*Foreword*) 1.

primitive thinking and scientific information sign system” from Jike’s individual life history.<sup>19</sup> There are full of differences and conflicts of self-presenter and researcher’s standpoint, as well as the perspective, knowledge background and value orientation, while their narration has dimly revealed some kind of embarrassment and contradiction. Besides, Liu Yaohan was confronted with dual culture identity—an embarrassment between Yi culture identity and modern discipline identity under Han culture, while Jike-Zeho was encountered an inevitable modernization transition of an ancient nation, together with its subsequent confusion and lost.

The special experience of writing *Between Gods and Ghosts* could be taken as a significant meet between the remaining “sage” in the deep Big Liangshan and well-known contemporary ethnologist, not only representing Yi’s ancient wisdom which has been taking a crack at transcending distant time to arduously have dialogue with contemporary knowledge system, but also a review and re-salvation of a confident discipline on national cultural tradition. In the name of “self-representation”, two Yi intellectuals, at the junction of tradition and new era, have expressed various internal appeals which are extremely complicated and sincere, interlaced sense and sensibility, fusion and conflicts, breaks and inheritance, as well as criticism and protection, etc, and transcended the display of so-called “objective” facts and “truth” of knowledge, but exactly fulfilled the true narration of principal experience and comprehension within culture which was advocated by experimental ethnography.

### 3. From “National Consciousness” to “Academic Consciousness”

#### 3.1. The Introduction of “Chinese Yi-Culture School (中華彝族文化學派)” and its Triple-Challenge

Since 1980s, based on the theory and practical achievements in *Series of Yi Culture Study*, Liu Yaohan set up “Chinese Yi-culture school”, putting forward three cultural elements, including “View of Male and Female of the Whole Creation, Gourd Worship, and Ten-month Calendar”,<sup>20</sup> and also triple-challenge to the ethnological study method of the time:

##### 3.1.1. Indigenous Ethnographical study of “Yi people writing Yi people”

Liu Yaohan held that the traditional study model of western anthropology was about white people writing on colored people. However, “since the founding of New Regime in 1949, Chinese nation including Yi nationality rose up, and they were able to write about their own stories”. Therefore, the series stressed the advantages of emic study methods in “Yi people mainly write about their own.”

##### 3.1.2. Method of “looking for ‘the countryside young lady’ (尋找‘山野妙齡女郎’法)”: combining field survey, archaeology with literature

In ethnological study, Liu Yaohan put forward the method of “looking for ‘the countryside young lady’”, setting up its foundation on the basis of “dual-evidence method (二重證據法)” proposed by Wang Guowei (王國維) and some other precursory scholars, which connected the literatures with archaeology, raising and systematically carrying out the study method which featured by “the ethnological materials from field survey as the major, and narrating Chinese Yi-culture with

<sup>19</sup> Jike 1990: (*General Preface*) 21.

<sup>20</sup> Jike 1990: (*General Preface*) 24.



reference to Yi and Han literatures and archaeological materials". As a result, it has gained relatively plentiful achievements.

### 3.1.3. Challenging with professional researchers as an amateur.

Unlike other series of ethnological study, the researchers, namely the authors of the *Series of Yi-Culture Study* "are just students from high colleges, junior colleges and technical secondary schools, without bachelor or doctoral degree" in Liu Yaohan comments. From his viewpoint, the standard of evaluating academic value lies in the new content and new idea. Since the beginning of 1980s, Liu Yaohan led young men and women to go to and fro between Big and Small Liangshan in Sichuan and Yunnan provinces regardless of winter and summer, and searched for rule and new ideas of Yi culture by field survey. The bold attempt was actually established upon his full confidence on Yi people's study about their own culture, and also revealed his effort to foster successors.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.2. Striding Across From "National Consciousness" to "Academic Consciousness"

Having been published in 1980s, *Series of Yi-Culture Study* was considered to "have proclaimed the birth of Chinese Yi-culture School and its culturology, and also one of the symbols representing Chinese history and ethnology going to a new prosperity and breakthrough."<sup>22</sup> "(*New Exploration on the Origin of Chinese Civilization* by Liu Yaohan) explored the origin of Chinese civilization, which undoubtedly marked the debut of cultural anthropology of modern China,"<sup>23</sup> arousing a relatively great social and academic attention.

Prof. Steven Harrell, the distinguished overseas Yi expert, classified academic study on Yi history and culture into two categories in his essay: one is to "prove the unity of Yi classification", and the other is to "exhibit glorious tradition". He argued that the latter one is to "prove to those concerning over Yi (especially Yi people themselves) that Yi culture was worthy of being proud of", and "the tradition of flamen Bimo was often the case." Liu Yaohan's study on Yi tradition including Bimo culture belongs to the second one.<sup>24</sup> Steven Harrell pointed out that part of the motivation of this study orientation is that Nuosu scholars exhibited another aspect of Yi's living and culture in responding to the traditional Yi study by Han scholars,<sup>25</sup> behind which was a complex process of self-reaffirmation of national identity. In the face of new "Yi" identity that resulted from national identification program after the founding of New Regime, contemporary Yi scholars, with Liu Yaohan as the representative, shifting from exclusion to acceptance, and then transiting to a positive attitude; therefore enhanced "self" culture writing of their own nation under contemporary context, so as to correspond to "the other's" writings of Chinese tradition.

Looking back on the Period of Republic of China at the beginning of last century, some Yi intellectuals like Qumo Zangyao(曲木藏堯)and Ling Guangdian(嶺光電)have become the path

<sup>21</sup> Jike, 1990: (*General Preface*) 1-27.

<sup>22</sup> Jike 1990: 28.

<sup>23</sup> Zhou Minfeng, *On Bold Arguments*. In *Reading Book*, 1987 (5).

<sup>24</sup> For example: Liu Yaohan, *Research Corpus of Investigation and Study on Yi Society and History*. Beijing: the Ethnic Publishing House, 1980.

<sup>25</sup> Stevan Harrell, *From Ethnic Group to Nation—Identity of Chinese Yi Nationality*. In Bamo Ayi (Yi) and Huang Jianming, ed., *Research Corpus of Overseas Scholars' Yi-Studies*. Kunming: Yunnan Education Press, 2000:15-21.

breakers exploring Yi's own culture.<sup>26</sup> Within the historical context at the time, most of their ethnographical writing practice took on a new "Yi (or Nuosu, Luoluo, etc)" identity and national consciousness, and was closely linked with the political appeals during the process of building new nationalist countries.<sup>27</sup> Up till now, it hasn't yet presented a relatively clear academic lines and appeals. Through half-century's vicissitude, Yi scholar Liu Yaohan established "Chinese Yi-culture School", seeking vigorously for his own nation the culture rights for narration and interpretation representing "subject of culture". Meanwhile, to further promote the shift of Chinese ethnological study model, he took a series of bold methodological endeavor, including writing practice of "experimental ethnography of self-presentation". In this sense, the generation of researchers from Chinese minority groups, with Liu Yaohan as the representative, have overtook their predecessors who firstly germinate "self-representation" impulse from "national consciousness", and further became an advanced "academic consciousness", which was more professional, disciplined and self-dependent. At the same time, this has, from a profile aspect, predicted various possible routes of contemporary Chinese ethnological and anthropological study model, writing pattern, narrative strategy, text style as well as the colorful space of disciplinary future development.

#### 4. Conclusion

Narrative is never a simple process.

In sense of anthropological reflection, *Between Gods and Ghosts* can be viewed as a special writing practice of multi-planned ethnography.

Yi's Bimo Jike-Zeho with "self-representation" looked back on his life history, while ethnologist Liu Yaohan held clear discipline consciousness all the way, through a series of adjustment and regulation of narrative strategy, putting the former self-presentation into the process of "ethnographical" text construction. As a result, this text was regarded as one of the models of "Yi people writing themselves", and participated the founding of "Chinese Yi-culture School", reaffirming the repeatedly-expressed "national consciousness" by Chinese intellectuals from minority groups since modern times. Furthermore, under the new time context and during the process of ethnology and anthropology discipline development, it became an external symbol for Yi ethnic intellectuals in pursuing academic discourse and express "academic consciousness."

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<sup>26</sup> For example: Qumo Zangyao, *Investigations of Southwest Yi*. Nanjing: Nanjing Bati Bookstore, 1933.

Ling Guangdian, *Descriptions and Studies on Lolo* (《俅情述論》). Chengdu: Kaiming Bookstore, 1943; *Memory—the Self-Representation of A Yi Chieftain* (《忆往昔——一个彝族土司的自述》). Kunming: Yunnan People's Publishing House, 1988.

<sup>27</sup> Contemporary Yi scholar Li Lie analyzed the social and historical background of studying Yi-culture of Yi intellects, with Qumo Zangyao and Ling Guangdian as the representative in the period of Republic of China, and discussed the complicated interactive relations between national construction and population identity. See Li Lie, *National Imagination And Academic Choices: The Establishment of Contemporary Academy of Yi Study*. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2006: 358-418.

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**Glossary**

Bimo 畢摩  
Cheung Siu-woo 張兆和  
Da Liangshan 大涼山  
daochang 道場  
fashi 法事  
fa ze tiandi 法則天地  
Jike-Erda-Zeho 吉克·爾達·則夥  
Jike-Zeho-Shiho 吉克·則夥·史夥  
Leshan City 樂山市  
Liangshanzhou 涼山州  
Lingguangdian 嶺光電  
Liu Yaohan 劉堯漢  
Lolo 倮倮  
Mabian County 馬邊縣  
Minshengxiang 民勝鄉  
mixin zhiyezhe 迷信職業者  
Nusu 諾蘇  
Qumo Zangyao 曲木藏堯  
ribi 日畢  
ten-month Calendar 十月曆法  
Wang Guowei 王國維  
Xichangshi 西昌市  
xiangtianfen 向天墳  
Xiao Liangshan 小涼山  
Yi 彝族  
zabi 匝畢  
zi lai bi bu qi 茲來畢不起  
zuo bi 做畢  
zuling 祖靈